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ABSTRACT

Michigan's response to the call for educational improvement is described. Included are a discussion of the historical background; a review of the state's response to reform demands; an explanation of pending and enacted proposals; a summary of reform activities across the country; and an analysis of the effectiveness of the reform efforts. A detailed description of pending school improvement legislation in Michigan is contained in the appendix (half of the document). Legislation covers such topics as school improvement, school accreditation, schools of choice, hiring noncertificated teachers, reducing class size, and employability skills testing. (15 references) (LMI)

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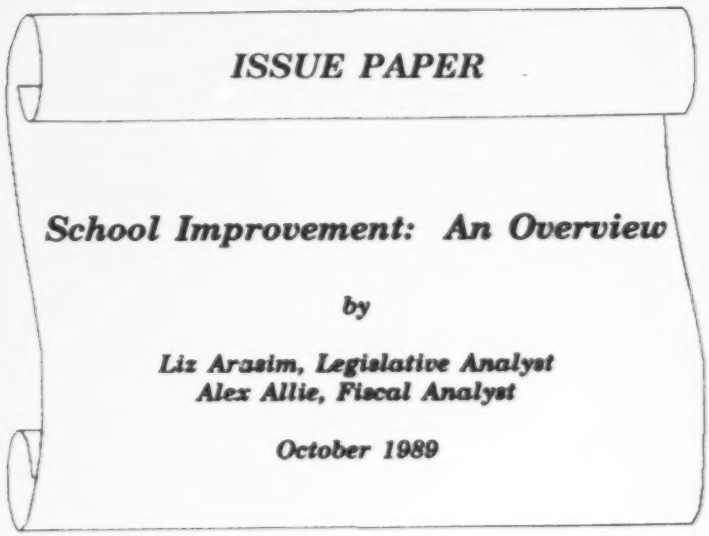

ISSUE PAPER

School Improvement: An Overview

by

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October 1989

"A Series of Papers Examining Critical Budgetary Issues Facing the Michigan Legislature"

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Educational Reform: A Historical Perspective 2

Calls for Reform 4
- National Recommendations 4
- Recommendations in Michigan 4

Michigan's Response 6
- Pending Legislation 6
- Improvement Efforts Underway 7
- Public Act 197 of 1989 and House Joint Resolution I 8
- Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) and Achievement Incentive Grants 9
- School Restructuring 10
- Other Categorical Initiatives 10
- State Aid Tied to Quality Measures 11

Reform Activities Across the Country 12

Still at Risk? 13

Appendix 15
- School Improvement 16
- School Accreditation 22
- Schools of Choice 24
- Hiring Noncertificated Teachers 28
- Reduced Class Size 30
- Employability Skills Testing 31
- Legislation Pending in House Committee 34

Notes 35

Bibliography 37

INTRODUCTION

Because so many auto assembly line workers could not read the words "bad hood fit" on a button that they were supposed to push to alert other workers about improperly aligned car hoods, the Chrysler Corporation had to replace the words with a graphic depiction. "We had to replace that with graphics because the guys just couldn't handle three monosyllables", said Chrysler Chairman Lee A. Iacocca. The Chrysler Corporation alone spends $11 million a year in remedial training for its workers.[1]

Approximately 75% of Michigan students completed high school in 1987. "[T]hat's unacceptable in the State of Michigan. It's morally unacceptable for us as a society. We can no longer move forward on the backs of our people. Michigan, the country, are going to move forward on the strength of our minds," said State Superintendent of Public Instruction Donald Bemis.[2]

This is just a sample of conditions concerning the state of education that have fueled the debate in Michigan and across the country as to the need for improving the educational system.

An alarm was sounded in 1983 when the National Commission on Excellence in Education warned that "the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people".[3]

Since then, other voices across the country and in Michigan have joined the chorus calling for educational improvement. This report will present a historical perspective to cries for educational reform and the development of some of today's educational difficulties, review Michigan's response to reform, explain school improvement proposals before the State Legislature as well as those included in the 1989-90 School Aid Act, review other states' reform activities, and discuss whether such reforms are making a difference. A detailed description of pending legislation is contained in the Appendix.

EDUCATIONAL REFORM: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The call for educational reform amidst a discussion of excellence in education is not new in the United States. In the latter part of the 19th century, for example, American curricula and instructional methods were revised to address concerns about an educational system that was deemed inferior to the system found in Europe. By the 1930s, schools, especially in the urban areas, had improved substantially. After World War II, however, urban education began to decline as the result of an accelerated move by the middle class from the cities to the suburbs. As surrounding communities expanded, urban areas began to suffer from the erosion of their tax base, resulting in a plummeting of financial and educational standards in city schools. Once again, calls for massive reforms of the public schools were heard. During the early part of the 1950s, a strong back-to-basics movement emerged to combat concerns that students were not reading up to standards.[4]

History notes that schools have been a part of social change that has occurred in this country. Thus, social policy and educational policy are intertwined.[5] This observation could not have been more applicable than in the latter half of the 1950s when Americans only had to look to the skies to view Sputnik--a tangible harbinger of the need to reform the educational system to address national concerns. In response to the launching of Sputnik by the Soviet Union in 1957, schools were called upon to help prepare the basis for the growth of technology in the country. The National Defense Education Act of 1958 demonstrated the country's desire to bolster the educational system with the federal government providing the energy and funding to implement efforts to improve the teaching of science, mathematics, and foreign languages. As a result of the Act, teachers were retrained; prominent educators were given subsidies to write new textbooks; and, federal grants--matched by financial contributions from the states and local school districts--were made available for the purchase of equipment and materials for science laboratories that needed to be upgraded. The National Defense Education Act symbolized the transition in American education from a traditional, but obsolete, curriculum to a new curriculum that emphasized science and mathematics.[6]

Attention to education did not falter with the dawning of the new decade. In fact, the federal government dramatically increased support to education during the 1960s. By the middle of the decade, the scope of federal involvement in education expanded through such programs as Project Head Start for youngsters entering school as well as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to aid elementary and secondary school students who came from disadvantaged backgrounds. At the same time, an awareness of social problems was developing along with a recognition that schools should participate in solutions to social ills, such as poverty and racism, that led to a burgeoning of school-related social programs. The educational system at that time mirrored a trend of social change that was spreading throughout society. Thus, curricula were altered to allow more individual choice; requirements were reduced; discipline was relaxed; and, the stress on foreign languages, science and mathematics was replaced with courses on social issues.[7] To a degree, schools retreated from traditional educational issues and became institutions that ensured adjustment to massive social change. Furthermore, schools were thrust into the center of a major social movement of the period--the civil rights struggle. As attention turned to

desegregating the educational system, court decisions often shaped educational policy. Throughout the decade, schools tackled a multiplicity of challenges at the cost, some observers noted, of weakening the traditional curriculum and academic standards.[8]

The 1970s have been characterized as the "nadir of public school quality"--a time when education lost its high place on the national agenda.[9] Schools were hit by numerous problems: rapid change, conflicting demands, fiscal deficiencies, and a teaching and administrative profession that had seen little movement in the past decade. Previously, education had been regarded as a panacea for social ills. During this period, schools were abandoned as arenas for social change. Popular regard for education and particularly for the public schools declined. Demands grew for safer school environments, more effective instruction, and more accountable leadership. The philosophy of involving the educational system to bring about social adjustment that was the hallmark of the educational system of the 1960s, gave way in the 1970s to concerns for discipline and a return to teaching the basic courses of reading, writing and mathematics.[10]

Educators and the general public were jolted by reports of: declining verbal and mathematics scores on college entrance exams, the lack of "higher order" thinking skills in high school students, the growth of functional illiteracy among high school students and adults, and high school graduates' lack of preparation for work or college. Fears about the inadequacy of the educational system were compounded as data indicated that the United States was losing ground to other countries.

Students in the United States ranked far below, and at times were in last place behind, the academic achievements of students in other countries. For example, in international comparisons of student achievement, which were conducted in the mid- to late 1970s and which used 19 academic tests, American students were never first or second but placed last seven times when compared to their counterparts from other industrialized nations. While some observers argued that such comparisons did not take into account the fact that foreign educational systems did not reflect the universality of the U.S. system, fears persisted that the United States would not be able to compete with other industrialized nations--especially those that are this country's economic competitors.[11] "The declining emphasis on science and mathematics in our school systems is in marked contrast to other industrialized countries", according to observations made in the text Science and Engineering Education for the 1980s and Beyond. "Japan, Germany, and the Soviet Union all provide rigorous training in science and mathematics for nearly all their students at pre-college levels. We fear a loss of our competitive edge." In an era of increasing technical and global complexities, the 1980s opened a period of efforts to make schools centers of excellence and return public education to its historical place of honor and influence in society.[12]

CALLS FOR REFORM

National Recommendations

Within months of the issuance of "A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform" by the 18-member National Commission on Excellence in Education, subsequent reports and independent studies supported the Commission's findings. Despite some divergence among the reports, common themes and recommendations emerged:

- -- Greater stress should be placed on science and mathematics education rather than on courses considered to be "frills" that are not relevant to preparing this country for global economic competition.
- -- Curricula should be related more to the job market and industries' needs.
- -- Instruction in foreign languages should begin in elementary school and should have a higher priority in curricula.
- -- Students should spend more time in school, and the time should be used more effectively.
- -- Teacher education programs must be strengthened, and the quality, autonomy, and pay of teachers must be improved.

While all the reports and studies provided a variety of detailed and specific proposals, they were unified in their call for improvement in academic standards and expectations. In general, the reports communicated a sense of urgency about the need to improve public education.[13]

Recommendations in Michigan

Following the national studies that challenged the American educational system to set on a course of improvement, the Michigan State Board of Education in 1984 suggested ways to improve education in Michigan in the document "Better Education for Michigan Citizens: A Blueprint for Action". Emphasizing equity as well as quality, the Blueprint was intended to provide a framework and be a guide for educational change in the State. Recommendations to local school districts included: development of school improvement plans, establishment of high school graduation requirements, establishment of student performance standards for use in reporting to parents as well as promotion and graduation criteria, increased instructional time, development of foreign language programs at the elementary level, and increased teacher salaries. In addition, the Legislature bolstered efforts to meet minimum high school graduation requirements by providing through the State Aid Act additional funds to school districts that adopted high school graduation requirements.[14]

Since 1984-85, according to the Department of Education, the number of school districts that require students to complete four years of English has increased from nearly one-third to one-half. Furthermore, the Department reports that the number of districts requiring additional credits in other subject areas, such as social science, mathematics, science, and computer education, has increased significantly.

The State Board took another step in 1987 in recommending improvements in education by publishing "Goals 2000: Education for a New Century". This document focused on a number of "goal areas" for Michigan's educational system including: student achievement, school quality (school accreditation and recognition programs), and professional development of teachers and administrators. This document as well as the "Blueprint for Action" reiterated proposals deemed critical to improving education, including high school graduation requirements, school improvement plans, and pre-school programs.[15]

As a continuation of the process, the State Board issued in 1988 "Goals 2000: Deliver the Dream", which outlined goals to provide a foundation for the continual improvement of Michigan's educational system. Objectives set by the State Board included: development of a model core curriculum that defined the general outcome to be achieved, implementation by school districts of a three- to five-year school improvement plan, the offering of a preschool program by all school districts for four-year-old children who are "at risk", development of a model employability skills curriculum and assessment of those skills, administration of a school accreditation program, and encouragement of districts through incentive funding to plan and implement a family options schools program.[16]

The State Board also sought in 1987 to meet quality education concerns by appointing the Michigan School Finance Commission. The Commission, which was composed of leaders from business, industry, labor, agriculture, the Legislature, education, and government, was charged with reviewing school finance issues and making recommendations on how equal educational opportunities could best be achieved. Central to the charge was the challenge that the quality of education be improved. In reporting its findings, the Commission recommended that the State Board and Legislature: define a core curriculum for the K-12 school system that would indicate required as well as elective courses, establish performance standards for schools, and create a process for school districts to prepare an annual school improvement plan. The Commission also proposed that school districts be encouraged to permit parents to choose a public school within a school district to which they would send their children.[17]

Similar themes and recommendations have been echoed by Governor James J. Blanchard, who in the 1989 State of the State Message, recommended that Michigan's educational system be "redesigned" to keep pace with new economic realities and to ensure the State's future prosperity. To that end, the Governor proposed a five-point strategy to move Michigan's schools into the next century, which included: expanding access to quality education by expanding preschool programs for four-year-olds and continuing programs to prevent students from dropping out of school; insisting on quality by setting tougher standards that challenged students, teachers, and administrators; rewarding success by recognizing and supporting pupils, teachers, and schools that were performing; restructuring schools by encouraging innovation and choice; and, encouraging creative use and integration of technology in the classroom. This strategy, entitled "Michigan Schools of Tomorrow", involved building on existing programs, such as those currently offered for preschoolers and dropouts, as well as proposing new efforts, such as the establishment of the Schools of Tomorrow Fund, to encourage innovations that would result in schools being more responsive to the diverse needs of students and more effective in educating all children to meet the demands of the 21st century.[18]

MICHIGAN'S RESPONSE

Pending Legislation

As part of the efforts to reform the educational system in Michigan, the State Legislature has been instrumental in proposing methods to improve educational programs. Legislation currently before the Senate and House of Representatives addresses school improvement issues. These bills, as well as proposals and goals set forth by the State Board of Education and the Executive Office, reflect many of the recommendations developed in the national and statewide reports on education that were issued earlier in the decade: school improvement, school accreditation, schools of choice, hiring of noncertified teachers, reduced class size, and employability skills testing.

Two Senate bills (Senate Bills 39 and 43) concern the issues of core curriculum and school improvement plans. Senate Bill 39 would require a local school board to make available a core curriculum based on a core curriculum developed by the State Board of Education. Senate Bill 43 would require a local school board to adopt and implement a three- to five-year school improvement plan and continuing school improvement process for each school within a district. School improvement plans and core curriculum issues also are embodied in House Bill 4009. That bill, among its provisions, would permit a local school board to adopt and implement a school improvement plan and process for each school in a district and permit a local school district to make available a core curriculum to all students attending a public school in the district.

Integral to the calls for educational reform have been demands by the public for accountability and assurance that schools, indeed, are delivering a quality educational program. School accreditation is viewed as one way of providing this accountability. Senate Bill 41 would require the accreditation of public schools in the State by September 1, 1998, and would require the Michigan Department of Education to develop and make available standards for accreditation.

As part of the desire to improve the quality of education, there is a belief that the educational system needs to be infused with a spirit of competition, by allowing parents to choose the schools their children will attend. Two Senate bills (Senate Bills 51 and 518) would address the schools of choice issue, with a variation in the approaches that are proposed. Senate Bill 51 would permit electors in a school district to petition for an election on the question of allowing parents to choose the public schools within the district that their children would attend. Senate Bill 518 would permit electors of each school district within an intermediate school district (ISD) to petition for an election on the question of allowing parents to choose the public schools within the ISD that their children would attend.

Since today's high school students will live in an increasingly technological and global society, even greater demands are being placed on the State's educational system to produce high school graduates who will be prepared to function in this rapidly changing society and economy. Thus, an understanding of highly technological subjects and a sound background

in the sciences and mathematics coupled with a familiarity with a foreign language are considered by many to be an integral part of a high school education for today and in the future. In order to provide the most up-to-date instruction in these subject areas, it has been suggested that school districts should be able to go outside of the traditional educational community to bring highly skilled professionals into the classroom. Senate Bill 52 would permit a local or intermediate school board to engage a full- or part-time noncertificated, nonendorsed teacher to teach in grades 9 through 12 a course in computer science, a foreign language, mathematics, biology, chemistry, engineering, physics, robotics, or any combination of these subjects.

Concern over an apparent decline in student achievement has led many to question what graduation from high school is supposed to signify. Reports and studies on the status of education generally have agreed that the knowledge and skills acquired by students in the course of their elementary and secondary education are often inadequate to meet the demands that graduating students face. To ensure that graduating students have at least minimal academic and employability skills and to help restore accountability in public education, it has been proposed that graduating students be required to take a competency test in basic academic and employability skills. Senate Bill 123 would require a school board to indicate on a pupil's transcript the pupil's competency and employability skills test results, unless a board voted to exempt itself and its school district from the bill's provisions.

(A complete discussion of the bills may be found in the Appendix to this report.)

Improvement Efforts Underway

A number of efforts are in progress at the State level and within local school districts to address the school quality issues of core curricula, school improvement plans, school accreditation, and educational reports, as well as teacher testing and administrator certification. As part of the implementation of "Goals 2000: Deliver the Dream", the Michigan Department of Education has taken steps toward the development of a model core curriculum that would define the general outcome to be received by all students and toward the implementation by local districts of a three- to five-year school improvement plan that would be based on improved student outcomes.[19] The State also is moving forward on the development of an employability skills test that students would take before they graduated to assess their academic, personal management, and team-building skills considered essential for success in the workplace. In July 1987, the Legislature adopted provisions in Public Act 133 of 1987 (the appropriations bill for the Department of Education) to mandate the development of an employability skills assessment program for endorsing students' high school diplomas.

The Governor's Commission on Jobs and Economic Development convened in November 1987 the Employability Skills Task Force, which is composed of business, labor, and education leaders. The Task Force was charged with the responsibility of identifying skills employers believed essential for employment. In October 1988, the Department of Education appointed the Task Force as an advisory committee for employability skills. An initial activity of the group was to survey, in April 1989, 500 Michigan employers' opinions on the necessity of the skills and behaviors outlined on the Employability Skills Profile. That

profile contained 26 skills and behaviors that were deemed essential for Michigan workers in the future. In addition, meetings were held this summer to identify the indicators of employability that would lead to the development of the employability skills assessment.[20]

School accreditation is viewed as one way of guaranteeing that a school has met certain standards of educational quality. The State Board of Education has adopted the Michigan Accreditation Program to provide public schools with a common set of standards designed to ensure a quality education and consistent instructional program for all students. This program covers elementary and middle/junior high schools, which are not served by existing accreditation programs. This fall, the Northeast Intermediate School, in Midland, became the first school in the State to be accredited under the State Board's accreditation program.

Several initiatives related to school improvement have been enacted into law. Public Act 159 of 1989 would amend the School Code to require a local school board to prepare and make available to the public and the State Board of Education an annual educational report. (The Act specifies that it will not take effect unless House Bill 4009, on school improvement, also is enacted.) Public Act 163 of 1986 amended the School Code to provide for the certification of local and intermediate school district administrators by the State Board of Education. In addition, Public Act 267 of 1986 amended the School Code to require as of September 1, 1991, that the State Board issue teaching certificates only to persons who have passed both a basic skills examination and each appropriate subject area examination in the subject areas in which they are seeking certification.

Public Act 197 of 1989 and House Joint Resolution I

Public Act 197 of 1989, the School Aid Act for fiscal year (FY) 1989-90, included a number of additional quality provisions, many of which are to become effective in the 1990-91 fiscal year. Through the new school improvement provisions of Public Act 197, the State Legislature has effectively placed local school districts on notice that specific educational quality measures will be tied directly to future State aid for schools.

Section 19 of Public Act 197 defines many new quality initiatives and planning requirements. Noncompliance with the provisions will lead to a forfeiture of specific percentages of State aid beginning in FY 1990-91. Section 19 also requires the Department of Education to develop formal accreditation standards by October 1, 1991. The accreditation review process of each local school district will begin in FY 1992-93.

Section 19 ties quality measures to State aid through the following requirements:

1. Beginning in FY 1990-91, each district will be required to administer a State Board of Education-approved employability skills assessment and provide an annual educational report. Noncompliance will result in the forfeiture of 3% of FY 1990-91 State aid.

2. Beginning in FY 1990-91, each district will be required to make available to all pupils a core curriculum based upon the "Michigan K-12 Program Standards of Quality" published by the State Board. Noncompliance will result in the forfeiture of 5% of State funds due in FY 1990-91.

3. Beginning in FY 1990-91, each district must adopt and implement a three- to five-year school improvement plan or plans and a continuing school improvement process for each school within the district. The plan, based upon criteria established by the State Board, must include methods for effective classroom management, methods of improving pupil academic and personal achievement, dropout prevention, parental and community involvement, staff development, and building-level decision-making. A district failing to adopt and file a school improvement plan before July 1, 1991, will forfeit 5% of its FY 1990-91 State aid.

By October 1, 1991, the State Department of Eduction is required to develop and make available to all K-12 public schools, standards to be applied for accreditation purposes. Beginning in FY 1992-93, the Department of Education will evaluate one-sixth of the public schools in the State for accreditation purposes. The Department will annually review one-sixth of the public schools in the State thereafter, plus each school that did not meet accreditation standards the immediately preceding school year.

House Joint Resolution I places two separate ballot proposals before Michigan voters on November 7, 1989. Proposal A, if approved, will increase the State sales tax from 4.0% to 4.5% with the additional revenue dedicated to school aid. Proposal B, if approved, will increase the State sales tax from 4.0% to 6.0% with the added revenue dedicated to reducing property taxes and providing new money for schools. If either proposal is adopted by voters, the quality provisions of Section 19 of Public Act 197 become mandatory. While the penalties for noncompliance are a moderate 3% to 5% in the School Aid Act, the entire amount of a local district's State aid will be jeopardized for noncompliance if either proposal is adopted.

Michigan Education Assessment Program (MEAP) and Achievement Incentive Grants

Section 34 of Public Act 197 of 1989 initiated financial incentives for specific cumulative pupil score test improvements. Incentive grants totaling $5,000,000 are available to local districts that demonstrate improvement in reading and mathematics as measured through MEAP. Any district may qualify for grants based upon cumulative student test score improvements in FY 1988-89 over FY 1985-86. Grants will be larger if a district's improvements are made from a lower starting performance point. Grant awards will require a minimum average test score increase of 0.30, calculated separately for reading and mathematics.

Section 34 is viewed as the first program providing financial incentives for defined improvements in pupil achievement levels. The new section also requires the Department of Education to research and report to the Legislature other creative and innovative methods to measure and reward improvement in pupil and educational competency. In addition to improvements in academic achievement, areas to be addressed by the report include pupil attendance and a district's membership retention rate.

School Restructuring

Public Act 197 of 1989 allocates $2,000,000 in FY 1989-90 through a new pilot categorical grant program to restructure the educational delivery system. The new section of the Act encourages and funds innovative and diversified educational programs to improve school performance.

A grant may be used for planning or implementing school restructuring, or both. To be eligible for funding, a local district must submit a plan developed by principals, teachers, parents or community leaders within the district. The plan must indicate how one or more schools within the district will be restructured by reallocating existing human and monetary resources to serve pupils better. A plan may include:

1. School site management teams who will review methods of redesigning and improving the educational delivery system of the school.

2. A restructuring of teaching methods that may include class size and composition and the use of telecommunications.

3. A restructuring of the responsibilities and organization of the teaching staff.

4. The use of alternative methods of assessing pupil achievement including competency-based testing and the use of projects and exhibitions.

5. The use of new instructional methods and curricula that explore subject areas in greater depth or that encourage the development of analytical skills, objective reasoning, and critical thinking.

Section 91 of Public Act 197 also provides incentive grants for school quality improvement programs. The FY 1989-90 budget allocates $2,400,000 for grants to applicant local and intermediate districts to develop and adopt long-range (three- to five-year) school improvement plans. Grants also will fund the preparation and distribution of an annual educational report and will be used to develop and adopt a core curriculum as a means of raising academic standards and improving school accountability.

Other Categorical Initiatives

Over the past five years, a number of quality measures have been implemented and expanded. Programs for Gifted and Talented pupils (Section 47 of Public Act 197) received a 10% funding increase in FY 1989-90 to $9,128,000. Grants for Early Education Programs to establish or expand education programs for educationally disadvantaged four-year-old children were increased by 43%. Sections 36-39 of the Act commit $17,200,000 for early education programs and increase the number of pupils and local districts qualifying for funding.

State Aid Tied to Quality Measures

Public Act 197 of 1989 includes more funding and programs for educational quality improvement at the local level than any annual School Aid appropriation in history. The categorical programs include incentive grants for pilot programs as well as new financial rewards for specific academic improvement trends. Perhaps more important are provisions in Public Act 197 that will directly tie future State aid to local districts to quality improvement measures and define minimum educational standards to be audited by formal accreditation procedures.

REFORM ACTIVITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY

The 1980s have been characterized as the decade of the educational reform movement. The movement caught fire in the states, while action by the federal government was dampened by federal budget constraints and, as a result, left to research and prodding. Leading the way in initiating changes were the Southeastern states, which adopted reform measures, increased teacher salaries and, in some instances, increased taxes to finance these changes. A variety of reform activities followed in other states across the country with school improvements being shaped to fit each state's educational system, yet containing common elements. Elements found in most reform plans include: a concept of what schools are expected to achieve (e.g., student competency in basic skills and improved scores on statewide achievement tests); rewards for success or penalties for failure (e.g., testing of students for grade promotion, merit pay for teachers, and incentive funding for school districts); and a system for measuring results.[21]

All 50 states have adopted some form of educational reforms. As of May 1988, 40 states had raised high school graduation requirements, 19 required students to pass a test to receive diplomas, 46 had mandated competency tests for new teachers, 23 had developed alternative types of teacher certification, six states were empowered to "take over" educationally deficient schools, and more than a dozen states had overhauled their school systems. In addition, local school districts have initiated reforms that are applicable to their particular schools.[22]

In the interim, many reform activities have been incorporated into the very fiber of educational systems across the country. "In the initial reform states, one large reform law or package of laws usually was enacted", according to the Education Commission of the States. "In each successive year, implementation rules and regulations, funding changes and delays, unforeseen costs and other problems have caused changes in the original reform objectives. For the most part, however, most reform programs have stayed in place. But what were easily identified as discrete reform activities in 1983-84 have started to blend into the general business of education, making the tracking of reform activities more difficult. In some states, the reform mandates already are a part of the education mainstream; in others, they are still identifiable, and yet in others, reform activity is still being initiated."[23]

STILL AT RISK?

Six years after a wave of educational reform inundated the educational landscape, sufficient reforms have been instituted to start making preliminary evaluations of their effectiveness. While some observers feel that education, government, and business leaders should be given an "A" for effort, there is concern that the nation still is at risk. The effects of reform measures are becoming evident, and the results are mixed. Despite encouraging signs of pockets of improvement around the country, not every innovation has been successful. In some cases, state legislatures mandated sweeping changes, but left the funding to financially burdened local school systems. At times it has been easier to prescribe than achieve higher standards. With the issuance of the U.S. Department of Education's sixth annual "wallchart", which measures educational data (e.g., pupil-teacher ratios, per-pupil spending, and teacher salaries) and performances of the 50 states, it was declared that as a nation "we are standing still".[24] In an address to the Education Press Association in May 1989, U.S. Secretary of Education Lauro F. Cavazos pointed out that this nation suffers from an "education deficit", whose symptoms include 27 million adults who are illiterate, a high school dropout rate of 28%, a national high school graduation rate of only 71.5%, college entrance exam scores that have declined or remained static during the past three years, and low scores in math and science by U.S. students in comparison to their peers in other industrialized nations. "By any measure one wishes to apply, we are failing or not making progress", Cavazos said.[25]

Furthermore, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has concluded that the reform movement "is irrelevant to many children--largely black and Hispanic--in our urban schools... There is...a disturbing gap between reform rhetoric and results."[26] Thus, the students who have benefited by reforms are those making it in the traditional educational system--the ones who need the reforms the least, according to one analysis. "Formulas for renewal--more homework, more testing, more requirements for graduation--work best for schools that already are succeeding and for students who are college bound", according to the Carnegie Foundation. "To require a troubled student in an urban ghetto to take another unit in math or foreign language without more guidance and support is like raising a hurdle in the high jump without giving more coaching to someone who has stumbled." Similar assessments have been echoed by Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, who said that analyses of achievement test scores and other measures, such as the ability to write a letter or read a bus schedule, indicate that only 10% to 20% of the students have benefited from reform activities.[27]

The question remains: what should the next wave of reform stress? Some have called for more substance in school curricula, especially since many schools already increased the number of required courses as part of initial reform efforts. Others believe that teachers and administrators should be given more autonomy to develop innovative approaches to teaching, coupled with some level of accountability of performance.[28] Nothing short of restructuring is being touted by some as the only way to improve the educational process. One proponent of that approach is Secretary of Education Cavazos, who has cited as examples of restructuring: curriculum reform that results in better education, alternative certification of teachers and principals, early childhood education, more decision-making

authority for teachers and parents, educational deregulation, and choice.[29] Shanker also has argued for a restructuring of sorts by way of the "school-within-a-school" concept whereby the teachers and administrators in a school are permitted to create its own educational program with parents having the right to enroll their children in these special schools.[30]

At this juncture in the reform movement, despite the irregularity in results of previous improvement efforts, there appears to be agreement that the reform movement must continue. "It took 15-20 years to get into the dilemma we are in", remarked National Education Association President Mary Futrell, "and it will take 10 or 15 years to get out." Some observers feel, however, that the fact that public interest in educational improvement has lasted this long is one measure of success.[31]

APPENDIX

The following section is a detailed discussion of school improvement bills currently before the State Legislature:

School Improvement: Senate Bills 39, 40, and 43; and House Bill 4009

School Accreditation: Senate Bill 41

Schools of Choice: Senate Bills 51 and 518

Hiring Noncertificated Teachers: Senate Bill 52

Reduced Class Size: Senate Bill 38

Employability Skills Testing: Senate Bill 123

Legislation Pending in House Committee

School Improvement

Senate Bill 39 (Substitute S-2)
Sponsor: Senator Dan L. DeGrow
Status: Passed by the Senate

The bill would amend the School Code to require the board of a school district to make available to all pupils attending school in the district a core curriculum based on core curricula that would have to be developed by the State Board of Education. The bill is tie-barred to Senate Bill 43, which would require a local school board to adopt and implement a school improvement plan.

The State Board would be required to develop recommended core curricula, in conjunction with curriculum and subject matter specialists, and transmit the curricula to each school district in the State. The core curricula would have to be based on the standards set forth in the "Michigan K-12 Program Standards of Quality", published by the State Board. The core curricula would have to include major long-term student goals and objectives.

Considering the State Board's recommended core curricula, a local school board would be required to:

- -- Establish a core curriculum for its pupils at the elementary and secondary levels. The core curriculum would have to be based on the school district's educational mission, long-range student goals, and student performance objectives.
- -- Determine the instructional program for delivering the core curriculum and identify the courses and programs in which the core curriculum would be taught.

The board could supplement the core curriculum by providing instruction through additional classes and programs. The core curriculum could be made available to all pupils in a school district by a school district, a consortium of school districts, or a consortium of one or more school districts and one or more intermediate school districts.

The State Board would be required to make available to all nonpublic schools in the State, as a resource for their consideration, the core curriculum developed for the public schools for the purpose of assisting the governing body of a nonpublic school in developing its own core curriculum.

Senate Bill 40 (Public Act 159 of 1989)
Sponsor: Senator John J. H. Schwarz, M.D.
Status: Enrolled

The bill would amend the School Code to require the board of a school district to prepare, publicly announce, and make available to the public and the State Board of Education an annual educational report, which would have to include information specified in the bill for each public school in the district. If a district prepared an annual educational report, each school in that district would

be required to distribute an annual educational report for that particular school. Within 90 days after the bill's effective date, the State Board would be required to prepare and make available to school districts suggestions for accumulating the required information, a model educational report for school districts to consider in implementing the bill, and a form for reporting pupil suspensions and expulsions that assured an accurate account of the total number of suspensions and expulsions in a school district. The bill cannot take effect unless House Bill 4009 also is enacted. (House Bill 4009, which is described in detail below, would permit a school board to adopt a core curriculum as well as adopt and implement a school improvement plan for each school in a district.)

Annual Educational Report

The annual educational report would have to include, but would not be limited to, all of the following information for each public school in the school district:

- The accreditation status of each school within the district, the process by which pupils were assigned to particular schools, and a description of each specialized school.
- The status of the three- to five-year school improvement plan, as proposed in House Bill 4009, for each school within the district, if the district had a school improvement plan.
- A copy of the core curriculum, as proposed in House Bill 4009, and a description of its implementation, if the district had a core curriculum.
- A report for each school of aggregate student achievement based on the results of any locally-administered student competency tests, statewide assessment tests, or nationally normed achievement tests that were given to pupils attending school in the district.
- For the year in which the report was filed and the previous school year, the number and percentage of pupils, identified by age, grade level, ethnicity, and gender, and whether they received special education services, who were suspended from any school in the school district for a total of at least three days during the school year, the length of each suspension for each pupil, the reason for each suspension, and whether the suspension affected the pupil's academic standing through the loss of credit or lowered grades.
- For the year in which the report was filed and the previous school year, the number and percentage of pupils 18 years of age or younger, identified by age, grade level, ethnicity and gender, and whether they received special education services, who were expelled from any school in the school district, the length of each expulsion, whether the expulsion was permanent, and whether the opportunity for alternative education was made available to the pupil.
- For the previous year, the number and percentage of school dropouts, as defined by the State Board, in the school district, identified by age, grade level, ethnicity, and gender, and any process for identifying and serving at-risk pupils and dropouts.
- For the year in which the report was filed and the previous school year, the number of pupils, identified at the elementary, middle, and secondary school levels, who were enrolled in the school in that district, as of the official count day and two other days.

No count could be made within six weeks of another.

- The number and percentage of households with pupils enrolled in the school district that participated in parent-teacher conferences for pupils at the elementary, middle, and secondary school level.
- The number and percentage of adults, both parents and adults without children, who served as volunteers in school classrooms, libraries, lunch rooms, and playgrounds, or in other ways.

In order to gather information on suspensions and expulsions, a school district would be required to use the form developed by the State Board or a form adopted by the school district and approved by the State Board.

Report to the Public

If a school board acted under the bill's provisions on preparing an annual educational report, the school board would be required to provide that each school in the district distribute to the public at an open meeting an annual educational report for that school, which would have to be made available to the general public. The report would have to include, but would not be limited to, all of the following information:

- The aggregate student achievement based on the results of any locally administered student competency tests, statewide assessment tests, or nationally normed achievement tests that were given to pupils attending the school.
- The number of pupils in each grade and the number of pupils working at, below, and above grade level in core curriculum subjects in each grade.
- A copy of the core curriculum adopted by the school district and the school and a description of its implementation, including the progress made in each grade in covering core curriculum subjects.
- If applicable, for the previous year, the number and percentage of school dropouts, as defined by the State Board, in the school district, and identified by grade level.
- A comparison with the previous school year of all reported categories.

Senate Bill 43 (Substitute S-1)
Sponsor: Senator John J. H. Schwarz, M.D.
Status: Passed by the Senate

The bill would amend the School Code to require the board of a school district, considering criteria established by the State Board of Education, to adopt and implement a three- to five-year school improvement plan and continuing school improvement process for each school within the district. The bill also would require the Department of Education, when requested, to assist a school district in developing and implementing a school improvement plan. The State Board would be required annually to review a random sampling of improvement plans and report on improvement activities to the Legislature. The bill would take effect 30 days after being enacted.

School board members, administrators, teachers, pupils, parents of pupils attending that

school, and other residents of the school district would be required to participate in the planning, development, and implementation of the district's school improvement plan. The improvement plan would have to be maintained on file with the intermediate school district to which the school district was constituent. The school board would be required annually to update the plan.

Upon request of a local school board, the Department of Education would be required to assist the school district in the development and implementation of a school improvement plan. Intermediate school districts and educational organizations also could provide assistance.

The State Board would be required annually to review a random sampling of school improvement plans and submit a report on school improvement activities planned and accomplished by each of the school districts that were part of the sampling to the Senate and House committees responsible for education legislation.

House Bill 4009 (Substitute H-4)
Sponsor: Representative James E. O'Neill, Jr.
Status: Passed by the House

The bill would amend the School Code to:

- **Permit a local school board to adopt and implement a school improvement plan and process for each school within the district.**
- **Specify information that would have to be included in the school improvement plan as well as prescribe persons who should participate in the planning, development, and implementation of the plan.**
- **Require the State Board of Education to review annually a random sampling of improvement plans and submit a report to the Legislature on the improvement activities of districts involved in the sampling.**
- **Permit a local school board to make available a core curriculum to all pupils attending a public school in the district.**
- **Require the State Board to develop a model curriculum, which a local school board would use as a guide in developing its core curriculum.**
- **Require the State Board to make available to nonpublic schools in the State the core curriculum developed for public schools, which could be used as a resource by the nonpublic schools.**
- **Permit an intermediate school district (ISD), upon request of a constituent school district, to provide comprehensive school improvement support services.**

ISD School Improvement Support Services

Upon request of the board of a constituent school district, an intermediate school board could provide to the district, either solely or as part of a consortium of ISDs, comprehensive school improvement support services. These services could include, but would not be limited to, all of the following: the development and evaluation of a core curriculum; the

preparation of one or more school improvement plans; the dissemination of information concerning one or more school improvement plans; the preparation of an annual educational report; professional development; educational research; the compilation of instructional objectives, or instructional resources, pupil demographics, and pupil academic achievement; assistance in obtaining school accreditation; and, general technical assistance.

School Improvement Plan and Process

A school board, considering criteria established by the State Board, could adopt and implement a three- to five-year school improvement plan or plans and continuing school improvement process for each school within the school district. The plan would have to include, at a minimum, proposed methods for effective classroom management, methods of improving pupil academic and personal achievement, dropout prevention, parental and community involvement in the school improvement process, staff development, and building-level decision-making. School board members, school building administrators, teachers, pupils, parents of pupils attending that school, and other residents of the school district would be required to participate in the planning, development, and implementation of the district's school improvement plan.

Upon request of a school board, the Department of Education would be required to assist, and the ISD to which the school district was constituent or a consortium of ISDs could assist, a school district in the development and implementation of a school improvement plan. A school improvement plan would have to be updated annually by the school board and be maintained on file with the ISD to which the school district was constituent.

The State Board would be required to review annually a random sampling of school improvement plans and submit a report on school improvement activities planned and accomplished by each of the school districts that were part of the sampling to the Senate and House committees that had responsibility for education legislation.

Core Curriculum

A local school board could make available to all pupils attending public school in the district a core curriculum developed pursuant to the bill. A model core curriculum would have to be developed by the State Board, define the outcomes to be achieved by all pupils, and be based on the "Michigan K-12 Program Standards of Quality" published by the State Board.

A school board would be required to determine, considering as a guide the core curriculum developed by the State Board, the courses that would comprise the school district's core curriculum and the sequence, by grade cluster, in which those courses would be taught. The core curriculum would have to explain any variance from the model core curriculum developed by the State Board. A subject or course required by the core curriculum would have to be made available to all pupils in a school district by that school district, a consortium of school districts, or a consortium of one or more school districts and one or more ISDs.

Nonpublic Schools

The State Board would be required to make available to all nonpublic schools in the State, as a resource for their consideration, the core curriculum developed by the State Board for public schools for the purpose of assisting the governing body of a nonpublic school in developing its own core curriculum. The bill specifies that this provision would not alter the obligation of school districts under Snyder v Charlotte Schools (421 Mich 517 (1984)) to offer to resident pupils of nonpublic schools nonessential elective courses that traditionally have been offered on a shared-time basis to those pupils.

School Accreditation

Senate Bill 41 (Substitute S-4)
Sponsor: Senator John J. H. Schwarz, M.D.
Status: Passed by the Senate

The bill would amend the School Code to require:

- **The accreditation of public schools by September 1, 1998.**
- **The Department of Education, by October 1, 1991, to develop and make available to public schools standards for accreditation.**
- **The Department in the 1992-93 school year to review and evaluate for accreditation the performance of one-sixth of the State's public schools.**
- **The Department beginning with the 1994-95 school year to review and evaluate for accreditation the performance of one-sixth of the State's schools, plus each school that did not meet accreditation standards the preceding school year.**
- **Measures to be taken if accreditation stands were not met for three consecutive years.**

The bill is tie-barred to Senate Bill 39, which would require local school boards to make available to all pupils attending school in the district a core curriculum based on a core curriculum that would have to be developed by the State Board of Education; Senate Bill 40, which would require a school board to prepare and make available to the public and State Board an annual educational report; and, Senate Bill 43, which would require a school board to adopt and implement a school improvement plan and continuing school improvement process. The bill would take effect 30 days after enactment.

Accreditation

The board of a school district would have to provide before September 1, 1998, that each public school in the district was accredited. "Accredited" would mean certified by the State Board of Education as having met or exceeded certain educational standards, processes, and criteria determined by the State Board as necessary for providing a "quality education" to pupils.

The State Board would be required to promulgate rules, as necessary, to implement the bill.

Standards

By October 1, 1991, the Department would be required to develop and make available to all K to 12 public schools standards, based on accreditation rules promulgated by the State Board, to be applied to each school for accreditation purposes.

Annual Review and Evaluation

In the 1992-93 school year, the Department would be required to review and evaluate for accreditation purposes the performance of one-sixth of the public schools in the State. Beginning in 1994-95 and each school year thereafter, the Department would be required annually to review and evaluate for accreditation purposes the performance of one-sixth of the public schools in the State, plus each school that did not meet accreditation standards the immediately preceding school year.

Failure to Meet Standards

A school that had not met accreditation standards for three consecutive years would be subject to one or more of the following measures, as determined by the State Board:

- The school would receive technical assistance, as appropriate, from the Department, the intermediate school district to which it was constituent, a consortium of intermediate school districts, or any combination of these until the school met accreditation standards.
- The Superintendent of Public Instruction, or his or her designee, would appoint an administrator of the school until the school met the accreditation standards.
- A parent or person in loco parentis of a child who attended the school would have the right to send his or her child to any accredited public school with an appropriate grade level within the school district or, if there were no accredited public school within the school district, within the intermediate school district to which it was constituent.

Report to Legislature

The Department would be required to evaluate the accreditation program and the status of schools accredited and would be required to submit, in June 1993 and June 1994, a report based on the evaluation to the Senate and House committees responsible for education legislation. The report would have to address the reasons each unaccredited school was not accredited and would have to recommend legislative action that would result in the accreditation of all public schools in the State.

Schools of Choice

Senate Bill 51 (Substitute S-3)
Sponsor: Senator Dick Posthumus
Status: Passed by the Senate

The bill would amend the School Code to:

- **Permit electors in a school district to petition for an election on the question of allowing parents to choose the public schools within the district that their children would attend.**
- **Require that an election be held before January 1, 1993, in school districts where petitions were submitted to a school board before January 1, 1992.**
- **Provide for the establishment of a schools of choice planning committee for a district in which voters approved a ballot question on schools of choice, and require schools in the district to form planning committees.**
- **Require a district planning committee to develop and submit to the State Board of Education a schools of choice program that the school district would have to implement.**
- **Require the Department of Education to provide guidelines on transportation, provide technical assistance, and monitor choice programs.**

Election

Before January 1, 1993, the board of each school district that had two or more schools with the same grade level would be required to submit to the school electors of the school district the question of whether their district should implement a schools of choice program that gave each parent, legal guardian, or person in loco parentis of a child residing within the district the opportunity to select from all public schools with an appropriate grade level within the district the public school that the child would attend.

The election could be held only in a school district in which a petition requesting the election was filed with the school board before January 1, 1992. The petition would have to be signed by at least 25% of the number of registered school electors of the district who voted in the immediately preceding election for school board members. The election would have to be held at the next school election after the petition was received.

Planning Committee

If a majority of the school electors approved the question, the school board would be required to establish a district schools of choice planning committee composed of one-third parents, one-third teachers, and one-third principals and pupils. The committee would be required to develop and submit to the State Board of Education a schools of choice program that the school district would implement.

When a district schools of choice planning committee began developing a schools of choice

program, each school within the school district also would be required to establish a schools of choice planning committee. This committee would have to be composed of teachers from the school plus parents, administrators, and other residents of the school district. A school planning committee could be a presently existing committee, if the committee met the bill's membership requirements. The school planning committee would be required to examine the strengths and educational goals of its school and consider ways in which the school could offer unique or exceptionally high quality educational programs to school-aged children residing in the school district. The school planning committee would have to report its findings to the school district's schools of choice planning committee, which would have to forward a copy of the report to the board.

A meeting and notification of a meeting of a planning committee would be subject to the Open Meetings Act, and committee documents would have to be made available to the public in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act.

Schools of Choice Program

A schools of choice program would have to include, but would not be limited to, all of the following:

- A plan to ensure that all parents, legal guardians, and persons in loco parentis of a school-aged child residing within the school district were provided with adequate information about the schools of choice program so that they could make informed decisions about which school their child would attend, and were given access to counseling about the schools of choice program.
- A plan to ensure that transportation to the school of choice would be provided to a child if the child were from a low income family, as determined by the Department of Education, or from a single-parent or two-career family that fell below an income level determined by the Department and could not provide transportation for the child due to a job-related schedule.
- A plan to ensure that each child had an equal opportunity for enrollment in the school that his or her parent, legal guardian, or person in loco parentis chose.
- A plan to ensure that successful school programs, as measured by an increase in pupil enrollment, would be provided with adequate resources to continue and expand.
- A plan to ensure that the teachers and principals of a school building had the authority to make decisions regarding school programs for their building as long as the school programs were consistent with the school district's curriculum policy.
- An explanation of how pupil assignment and transfer policies would maintain school district standards of racial and ethnic integration.
- A provision that if the school board had joined an athletic association, the pupils and schools of the district would remain subject to the rules of the association.

By June 30 of each year of the program, a school district implementing a schools of choice program would have to report to the Department the results of the program's implementation.

Department Requirements

The Department would be required to do all of the following:

- Provide guidelines for school districts to use in determining how pupils from families needing transportation assistance would be transported.
- Provide technical assistance and administrative support, as needed, to school districts implementing a schools of choice program.
- Disseminate information to school districts, the public, and the Legislature on the characteristics and success of the schools of choice programs.
- Monitor all schools of choice programs to determine if they were in compliance with the bill's requirements for a schools of choice program.

Senate Bill 518
Sponsor: Senator Nick Smith
Status: Before the Senate Education and Mental Health Committee

The bill would amend the School Code to:

- **Permit electors of each school district within an intermediate school district (ISD) to petition for an election on the question of allowing parents to choose the public schools within the ISD that their children would attend.**
- **Require that the election be held before January 1, 1992, in a constituent school district of an ISD where a petition was filed with the ISD before January 1, 1991.**
- **Specify language for the ballot question and the number of electors who would have to sign the petition.**
- **Require the school boards of the ISD's constituent districts to establish a tuition fee of up to $300 for a child who attended school in the school district and resided in another of the ISD's school districts.**
- **Permit a local school board to limit the number of nonresident children that the district would accept, as long as the board would ensure that each nonresident child had an equal opportunity for enrollment.**
- **Require that a parent or guardian who sent a child to a school in another district of the ISD be responsible for the child's transportation.**

Election

Before January 1, 1992, the board of each school district within an intermediate school district would be required to submit to the school electors of the school district the question of whether their ISD should implement a schools of choice program that gave each parent, legal guardian, or person in loco parentis of a child residing within the ISD the opportunity to select from all public schools with an appropriate grade level within the intermediate school district the public school that the child would attend.

The election could be held only in a constituent school district of an intermediate school

district in which a petition requesting the election was filed with the intermediate school board before January 1, 1991. The petition would have to be signed by a number of registered school electors of the ISD equal to at least 10% of the number of school electors of each of the constituent school districts who voted in the immediately preceding election for school board members of their local school district. The election would have to be held at the next school election after the petition was received.

School Selection/Limitations

If a majority of the school electors of the intermediate school district approved the question:

- A parent, legal guardian, or person in loco parentis of a child residing within a constituent school district of the ISD would have to be given the opportunity, subject to enrollment limitations, to select from all public schools with an appropriate grade level within the ISD the public school that his or her child would attend.
- The school board of each of the constituent districts of the ISD would be required to establish a tuition fee of not more than $300 for a child who attended school within the school district and resided within another school district of the ISD. In addition, a pupil's school district of residence would be required to permit the receiving school district to count the pupil in membership for purposes of State aid payments.

A school board, by a majority vote of the total number of board members, could limit the number of nonresident children that the school district would accept. The board would have to ensure that each nonresident child had an equal opportunity for enrollment in the school that his or her parent, legal guardian, or person in loco parentis chose for him or her. A school board could exempt special education pupils from the bill's provisions.

Transportation

A parent, legal guardian, or person in loco parentis who sent his or her child to a school in another school district of the ISD would be responsible for the child's transportation to that school.

Hiring Noncertificated Teachers

Senate Bill 52 (Substitute S-1)
Sponsor: Senator Vern Ehlers
Status: Passed by the Senate

The bill would amend the School Code to:

- **Permit a local or intermediate school board to engage a full- or part-time noncertificated, nonendorsed teacher to teach certain subjects in grades 9 through 12.**
- **Limit the hours of pupil instruction provided by these teachers.**
- **Establish minimum requirements for these teachers.**
- **Prohibit a school district from engaging a noncertificated, nonendorsed teacher to teach a course if a certificated, endorsed teacher were available.**
- **Require, in certain circumstances, that the teaching experience of a noncertificated, nonendorsed teacher be used to waive the student teaching requirement as a condition for receiving continued employment authorization in a school district and a provisional teaching certificate.**
- **Require the State Board of Education to promulgate rules to implement the bill.**

Noncertificated/Nonendorsed Teachers

The bill would create an exception to the provision of the School Code that prohibits the board of a school district from permitting a teacher who does not hold a valid teaching certificate to teach in a grade or department of the school, or permitting a teacher without an endorsement by the State Board of Education to serve in a counseling role.

Under the bill, the board of a local or intermediate school district could engage a full- or part-time noncertificated, nonendorsed teacher to teach in grades 9 through 12 a course in computer science, a foreign language, mathematics, biology, chemistry, engineering, physics, robotics, or any combination of these subjects. The total number of hours of pupil instruction taught by such teachers could not exceed 10% of the total number of hours of pupil instruction taught by all of the teachers in the school district.

The board of a local or intermediate school district could not engage a full- or part-time noncertificated, nonendorsed teacher to teach a course, as identified in the bill, if the district were able to engage a certificated, endorsed teacher who possessed the expertise needed to teach that course.

Minimum Requirements

A noncertificated, nonendorsed teacher would be qualified to teach pursuant to the bill if he or she met all of the following minimum requirements:

- Possessed an earned bachelor's degree from an accredited postsecondary institution.
- Had a major or a graduate degree in the field or specialization in which he or she was to teach.
- Had passed both a basic skills examination and a subject area examination, if a subject area examination existed in the field of specialization in which he or she was to teach. This provision would take effect September 1, 1991, and would apply only if the teacher desired to teach for more than one year.
- Had at least two years of occupational experience in the field of specialization in which he or she was to teach, unless the person was engaged to teach a foreign language.

The bill specifies that these requirements would be in addition to any other requirements established by the board of a local or intermediate school district, as applicable.

Continued Employment

If the board of a local or intermediate school district were able to engage a certificated, endorsed teacher to teach a course, as specified in the bill, the local or intermediate school board could continue to employ a noncertificated, nonendorsed teacher to teach the course if both of the following conditions were met:

- The noncertificated, nonendorsed teacher was annually and continually enrolled and completing credit in an approved teacher preparation program leading to a provisional teaching certificate.
- The noncertificated, nonendorsed teacher had a planned program leading to teacher certification on file with the employing school district or intermediate school district, his or her teacher preparation institution, and the Department of Education.

If the board of a local or intermediate school district were not able to engage a certificated, endorsed teacher to teach a course specified in the bill, the Department of Education and a teacher preparation institution would be required to use the teaching experience of a noncertificated, nonendorsed teacher for the purpose of waiving student teaching as a condition for receiving a continued employment authorization in the school district and a provisional teaching certificate.

Reduced Class Size

Senate Bill 38
Sponsor: Senator Dan L. DeGrow
Status: Before the Senate Education and Mental Health Committee

The bill would amend the School Code to specify that each school board "is encouraged" to provide, by the start of the 1994-95 school year, either for an average class size of up to 22 pupils in grades K to 3 and up to 25 pupils in grades 4 and 5, or for a reduction in class size of at least 2.5% from the average class size in these grades in the immediately preceding school year.

Employability Skills Testing

Senate Bill 123 (Substitute S-2)
Sponsor: Senator Nick Smith
Status: Passed by the Senate

The bill would amend the School Code to require a school board to indicate on a pupil's transcript the pupil's competency and employability skills test results, unless the board voted to exempt itself and its school district from the bill's provisions. "Competency and employability skills test" would mean one or more tests administered by a local school district in order to determine a pupil's competency in English, mathematics, science, and other subject areas as defined by the State Board of Education; and, to assess competency in selected employability skills as defined by the State Board. A local school district could use a test developed or selected by the State Board or by the local district, based on guidelines developed by the proposed Competency and Employability Skills Test Advisory Committee. The bill's requirements would take effect according to a timetable that would extend from January 1, 1991, to January 1, 1996.

Schedule

The bill's schedule for implementation of student competency testing is outlined as follows:

Activity	Deadline
The Competency and Employability Skills Test Advisory Committee would be required to recommend to the State Board guidelines for the development and administration of the competency and employability test, and could recommend consolidation of this test and the Michigan Education Assessment Program 10th grade test.	January 1, 1991
The State Board, based upon guidelines recommended by the Advisory Committee, would be required to provide guidelines for school districts to consider in the development or selection and use of a competency and employability skills test, including guidelines for interpreting test results.	March 1, 1991
The State Board would be required to develop or select and make available to local school districts a competency and employability skills test. At least every five years, the State Board would be required to evaluate and make recommendations for upgrading the competency and employability skills test.	January 1, 1992
Each local school district would be required to indicate by board resolution to the Department whether the school district would use the competency and employability skills test developed or selected	June 1, 1992

by the State Board, whether the school district would submit to the Department for State Board approval the district's locally developed or selected competency and employability skills test, or whether the school district would not be giving a competency and employability skills test to its pupils.

Activity	Beginning
A pupil who attended school in a district that gave a competency and employability skills test would have to be given an opportunity to take his or her local school district's competency and employability skills test in the 10th grade and would be required to take the test before graduation.	September 1, 1992
The board of a school district would be required to indicate each pupil's competency and employability skills test results on the pupil's transcript. The transcript could include a profile of competency and employability skills in the tested skills. If a transcript contained a profile of competency and employability skills, the school board would be required to provide a written explanation of the profile to the pupil when he or she received the transcript.	September 1, 1993
The State Board would be required to submit in writing a summary analysis of the competency and employability skills test program to the Senate and House committees responsible for education legislation.	January 1, 1996 and each year thereafter

Exempt from Bill

A school board, by a majority vote of its members, annually could exempt itself and the school district from the bill.

Report to the Public

The board of each school district that gave a competency and employability skills test to its pupils would have to make available to the public in an annual report the results of the test on a district and building-by-building basis.

Advisory Committee

The State Board would be required to appoint a Competency and Employability Skills Test Advisory Committee that would have to include, but would not be limited to, representatives of parents, the community, labor, management, businesses, and appropriate educational organizations and associations. The State Board would be required to make available to the Advisory Committee technical consultants to advise on the validity, reliability, and other technical standards of the student competency and employability skills test.

Technical Assistance

The Department, upon request, would be required to provide technical assistance to a local school district in the development and administration of its competency and employability skills test and, upon request, provide technical assistance to a local school district in the development and administration of assessment tests for pupils in grades 1 to 10.

Failing/Repeating the Test

A pupil who was assessed as not competent in a subject or skill area tested by a competency and employability skills test would have to be provided opportunities for reinstruction in each deficient skill area and could repeat the test during each school year until the pupil was assessed as competent in that subject or skill area. Upon completion of all other requirements for a high school diploma, a person could repeat the competency and employability skills test at any time the school district regularly offered the test and upon demonstration of competence would be given a revised transcript indicating competency in the subject or skill area in which he or she was previously assessed as not competent.

Special Education

The State Board could exempt special education pupils from requirements of the bill.

Legislation Pending in House Committee

In addition to the bills discussed above, several bills are pending before the Committee on Education in the House of Representatives. Those bills include: House Bill 4144, which would encourage reduced class size; House Bill 4145, which would provide for a core curriculum; House Bill 4287, which would require students to pass basic and employability skills tests before graduation with test results to be indicated on a pupil's transcripts; House Bill 4444, which would establish the Governor's achievement incentive program; and, House Bill 4615, which would provide for schools of choice.

NOTES

1. "Iacocca Urges Education Overhaul, Says Some Autoworkers Can't Read", The Detroit News, March 23, 1989, p. 1.

2. "U.S. Schools Stagnant, Warns Education Chief", The Detroit Free Press, May 4, 1989, p. 1.

3. "A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform", National Commission on Excellence in Education, April 1983.

4. "Educational Standards: A Public Educator's Views", Ruth B. Love, Education on Trial, edited by William J. Johnston, ICS Press, 1985, p. 37.

5. "The Great Education Crisis", Philip G. Altbach, Excellence in Education, edited by Philip G. Altbach, Gail P. Kelly, and Lois Weis, Prometheus Books, 1985, p. 15.

6. Love, p. 40.

7. Ibid., p. 41.

8. Altbach, p. 16.

9. Love, p. 42.

10. Altbach, pp. 17-18.

11. Improving Our Schools, Marilyn Clayton Felt, Education Development Center, Inc., 1985, p. 4.

12. "Post-Sputnik Education", Education Report Card, Editorial Research Reports, Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1985, p. 70.

13. Altbach, pp. 19-20.

14. "Better Education for Michigan Citizens: A Blueprint for Action", Michigan State Board of Education, May 1987.

15. "Goals 2000: Education for a New Century", Michigan State Board of Education, April 1987.

16. "Goals 2000: Deliver the Dream", Michigan State Board of Education, November 1988.

17. "Educational Quality in the 21st Century", Michigan School Finance Commission, September 1987.

18. "Michigan Schools of Tomorrow", James J. Blanchard, February 1989.

19. "Goals 2000: Deliver the Dream Status Report", presented September 26, 1989, to the Michigan State Board of Education.

20. "A Brief History of the Michigan Employability Skills Program", Michigan Department of Education Memorandum, August 10, 1989.

21. "Education Reform", State Policy Reports, Volume 7, Issue 14, State Policy Research, Inc., Alexandria, Virginia, July 1989, p. 2.

22. "A Nation Still at Risk", Newsweek, May 2, 1988, p. 54.

23. "Education Reform", pp. 3-4.

24. "Measuring Education Results", State Policy Reports, Volume 7, Issue 13, State Policy Research, Inc., Alexandria, Virginia, July 1989, p. 2.

25. "Restructuring American Education Through Choice", Vital Speeches of the Day, City News Publishing Co., Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, July 15, 1989, p. 514.

26. "A Nation Still at Risk", p. 55.

27. "Many American Schools Still at Risk", National Journal, National Journal, Inc., Washington, D.C., April 23, 1988, p. 1083.

28. "A Nation Still at Risk", p. 55.

29. "Restructuring American Education Through Choice", p. 514.

30. "Many American Schools Still at Risk", p. 1083.

31. "A Nation Still at Risk", p. 55.

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